

Closing the Gap: Medicaid Coverage for HIV

Medicaid Will Pay for End-Stage AIDS Care, But NOT for HIV treatment.

Medicaid provides medical care for low-income people who have AIDS and are deemed to be totally disabled, but current regulations prevent many Illinoisans from accessing Medicaid coverage when they are diagnosed with HIV. Instead, the current rules say: “come back for a Medicaid card after you get a lot sicker.”

But People Need Medical Care EARLY to Extend Their Lives and Well-Being.

People with HIV need quality medical care to help PREVENT and DELAY the onset of disabling and expensive medical crises. In fact, getting people with HIV into care as soon as they are diagnosed with HIV is a nationwide priority because early care keeps people healthy, keeps people working, and keeps people out of (very expensive) emergency rooms.

Medicaid Rules CAN be Changed—to Benefit Everyone.

Medicaid—which is jointly operated by the State of Illinois and the U.S. government—can be changed through state OR federal action. Right now, there is work being done at both levels to reform Medicaid in a way that is smart, economical, and that promotes public health.

- **Currently in Congress, the Early Treatment for HIV Act would allow states to expand Medicaid to cover HIV (this change could benefit people in every state).**
- **In Illinois, state officials are exploring ways to expand Illinois’ Medicaid program to cover HIV as well as AIDS (this change would just affect Illinoisans).**

Medicaid is Important Because It Is a Reliable Source of Funding for HIV/AIDS Care.

Medicaid is currently the LARGEST SINGLE payment source for HIV/AIDS care in the United States. As an entitlement program, Medicaid spending in Illinois triggers federal dollars to match all state money spent on Medicaid, and Medicaid funding is more protected than most spending on public health programs. Medicaid coverage is less likely to be taken away than CARE Act programming, or other care funded with “discretionary” monies—and Medicaid funds can pay for a comprehensive array of medical services, as well as prescription drugs.

HOW YOU CAN PLAY A ROLE IN IMPROVING MEDICAID IN ILLINOIS:

1. **Tell your federal elected officials to support the Early Treatment for HIV Act.**
2. **Join the AIDS Foundation of Chicago in supporting state efforts to expand Illinois’ Medicaid program to cover low-income Illinoisans with HIV.**
3. **Enlist the support of organizations you are affiliated with to support efforts to improve Medicaid—at both the state and national levels.**

For more information on how YOU can help expand Medicaid in Illinois, contact the AIDS Foundation of Chicago at www.aidschicago.org or 312-922-2322